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

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY



WORSHIP RESOURCES

by Robert Chase

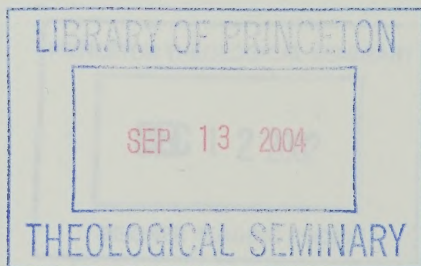
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Celebrate the journey

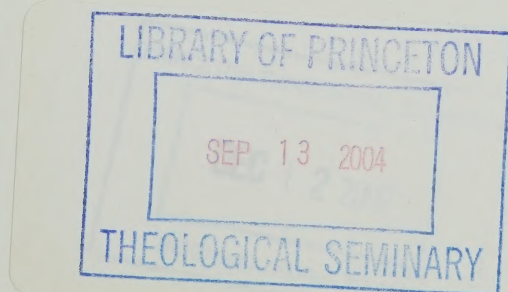


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January

Call to Worship

*Leader: The night passes; the day dawns!
Thanks be to you, O God, for your
continuing care!*

*People: Another year passes; a new year dawns!
Thanks be to you, O God, for your unfolding
love.*

*Leader: As sunrise brightens the morning sky, we are awakened
to the journey ahead.*

*People: Wipe the sleep from our eyes, O God, and remove
the hesitancy from our step. Fill us with the power
of love: strengthen us with the wisdom of
memory.*

*Leader: In the challenge of faithfulness in our time, may we
find cause for celebration and hope. Instruct us so that
we may learn from all that has gone before. Keep us on
the road from today into tomorrow.*

*People: In this new age dawning, grant us wisdom in this
hour. Grant us courage in this new year. Grant us
vision for the journey ahead.*

**All: In the name of the One who makes all things
new, Amen and Amen!**

Prayer for Hope in the New Year

UNISON

O God of Wisdom, you have given us the gift of years that we might gain experience and understanding, that we might learn righteousness, that we might demonstrate concern and compassion over time.

Now, as the calendar turns another page, give us a fresh spirit. Season our experience with energy, our righteousness with tolerance, our compassion with a determination to stand firm in the faith. Fill us with a renewed sense of awe at the wonders of creation. Bring the generations together in true community, with Christ at the center.

Enable us to build structures that enhance our listening to one another and learning from one another. Bestow upon us the gift of empathy, that we might feel kinship with those who live in circumstances unlike our own. Grant us the insight to discern your will in the midst of a million messages that bombard us each day.

Help us to face challenges ahead with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who brings new life to all who believe. Amen.

February

Litany of Preparation

Leader: Like Abram of old, the journey stretches out before us. Where, O Lord, do you lead us? Where will we call home?

People: Since our destination remains unknown to us, we must be spontaneous: responsive to God's continually unfolding spirit, to the movements of history, to the changing needs of sisters and brothers in our midst. We must be willing to take risks, for ours is a journey of risk-taking.

Leader: But we cannot move blindly on, we must prepare for our work, becoming disciplined disciples so that we can effectively embark upon the task to which God calls us. And how do we prepare?

People: We need to pray so that our souls are nourished and our hearts are open to the continually evolving call of the Holy Spirit.

Leader: We must study God's Word as found in Scripture, in order to understand God's will for peace and justice in the world. We must be mindful of the prophets of old who spoke to the powers and principalities of their day; whose allegiance was to Yahweh, and who prodded and cajoled the people of faith in times of idolatry and complacency.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

People We must also hear Jesus' words, for in the gospel message we find the center of our faith. We must learn from first-generation Christians: their enthusiasm and their steadfast faith in circumstances of oppression, poverty, conflict and misunderstanding.

Leader: *And we should be aware of mission and ministry in our own church family. For 200 years, Presbyterian women and men have been struggling to be faithful, building a community of believers who have served as Christ's witness in the world.*

People: Like Abram of old, the journey stretches out before us. Where, O Lord, do you lead us? Where will we call home? Remind us that if we faithfully prepare, our destination will be a place where your kingdom has come, where your will is done, and where we can find your promise of abundant life.

Genesis 12:1-4

From *CLAIMED BY GOD'S GRACE*

Stewardship Theme Book

Go.

Where?

I shall tell you in time. For now, just go and trust.

But the desert is bleak and beyond the horizon is unknown to me.

I will always be with you.

Always?

Always.

There is so much to do. I don't know if I have the strength or the will or the faith.

I have claimed you for my own. I have set you apart to complete the task. If you need strength, ask. If you need courage, pray. If you have doubts, believe in my words.

Then I will go and I will declare what I believe wherever I may be.

So be it. I have chosen well.

GENESIS 12:1-4a

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you. I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing.

**I will bless those who bless you,
but I will curse those who curse you.**

**And through you I will bless
all the nations."**

When Abram was seventy-five years old, he started out from Haran, as the Lord told him to do....

Offertory Prayer

Eternal God, whose Word is ever new, we give you great thanks for the unknown journey that lies before us. Kindle in us a sense of wonder and excitement for each new day. Build in us an ever deepening commitment to move boldly forward.

Now, open our hearts with joy and thanksgiving and grant us creative vision and humble generosity as we return to You a portion of what you have so graciously given to us.

Then, use these gifts, O God, so that all might experience the abundant life. Make possible spontaneous moments of power and grace along the pathway of faith; so that the journey is sprinkled with serendipity and joy. Surprise us with the multiplication of miracles that occurs when we give joyfully, trusting in Your love.

As we take up our offering this day, keep us true to the task, and steadfast along the way. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

March

Prayer of Confession

UNISON

Gentle Lord, forgive us when we forget, ignore or overlook the pain in your journey to Jerusalem. We confess that we are often blind to your example, deaf to your instructions, apathetic towards others and stubborn in our refusal to change. We have not loved without expecting something in return; we have not lived with compassion in our hearts; we have not followed the way of your gospel.

And yet we are surprised when we find that somehow we miss the abundant life you promise. How short-sighted is our vision; how counterproductive our lifestyles.

Lift us from despair. Light the way to the future. Lead us boldly into Jerusalem to stand with you, so that we might know the power of faithful discipleship. Help us to be beacons of hope in the midst of poverty and oppression, violence, fear and greed.

Make us ministers; mark us as missionaries; mold us as messengers of the Good News. As we confront the controlling threat of evil in the workings of powers and principalities, empty promises and corporate lies, walk with us along the journey of faith, so that your example remains our rock, and the Holy Spirit, our counselor and guide. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Though we have sinned, we are affirmed; though we have not loved, we are loved; though we have walked away from God's call, we are drawn back with the promise of a new opportunity, a new hope, a new chance to show the world, and ourselves, that we are free in Christ. Thanks be to God for this inexpressible redemption. In the name of the compassionate Christ, we are grateful to say, Amen!

Acts 3:25-26

The promises of God through his prophets are for you, and you share in the covenant which God made with your ancestors. As God said to Abraham, 'Through your descendants I will bless all the people on earth.' And so God chose his Servant and sent him to you first, to bless you by making every one of you turn away from wicked ways.

April

Call to Worship

Leader: Alleluia, Christ Is Risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: He has broken all barriers, he has set us free!

People: Now we can travel forward without fear or dread.

Now we can be Easter People!

Now we can proclaim the Good News that Christ is alive forever!

Now we can smile at death and live our lives in dignity and hope!

Leader: In our unfolding journey of faith, we are continually astonished by this day!

We give thanks for this day!

We live in this day, because on this day God gives us evidence of the gospel promise!

People: In him, no stone cannot be lifted, no power cannot be defeated, no sickness cannot be cured, no obstacle cannot be overcome.

Leader: There is only faith and hope and a journey that beckons us with the expectant radiance of that first Easter morn!

People: Thanks be to God for this day of days! Amen!

Litany of Joy

Leader: Joyful is the sound we make today, O Lord!

People: For this day liberates us from doubt and fear!

Leader: Thankful is the song we sing!

People: For this day moves us past darkness and despair!

Leader: Hopeful is the prayer upon our lips!

People: For this day awakens in us the possibilities of new life for all!

Leader: With the women of old, we've journeyed to the tomb, we've seen the stone rolled away, we've breathed in the unexplainable mystery of resurrection and we've been empowered by the spirit of this new creation.

People: Now we can truly dance! Now we can truly sing! Now we can truly celebrate! The journey is from death to life, from darkness to dawn, from despair to unbounded joy! Praise be to you, O God, for this most inexpressible gift! In Jesus' name, Alleluia! Amen!

May

Prayer for the Church in Preparation for Pentecost

Merciful God, we are mindful in this Easter season that we are but a small part of the body of Christ. Generations have come before us and, no doubt, generations will follow. We call ourselves Presbyterians, and we know that your church also consists of Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, Methodists and Baptists, Anglicans, Congregationalists and a myriad of sects who do mission and ministry in your name. This body of yours, Jesus, is as complex and contradictory as our own bodies.

Even among Presbyterians, we struggle to be one. There are some who consider themselves separate, some who will not communicate with others; there are differences of opinion among us on even the most basic issues that confront our times.

As we prepare for the season of Pentecost, and as we prepare to celebrate the 200th General Assembly of American Presbyterians, we pray that you would keep us alert to the gift of diversity, that you would keep us humble and open to the workings of your spirit. Remind us of the zeal which claimed your early followers. Give us the spirit of the Pentecost wind so that we might speak in languages that others understand; and hear other disciples as they seek to communicate with us.

Help us especially to share the faith with young people in our midst. Help us to address their concerns and to be sensitive to their needs. Open our hearts to endeavors in

ministry and forms of worship which speak to a new generation of Christians.

As we consider our past, prod us to do so with an eye to the future, so that our communities of faith can offer to this troubled and weary world a bold vision and hopeful expectations in your name.

We pray for those who instruct our youth and for church schools throughout this land, that our teachers might feel affirmation in the essential task which they perform. We pray that their examples reflect the love and concern which is from you. We pray that all of us may discover within ourselves the insights and resources which can make church school relevant in our contemporary world.

We pray for those who are responsible for the new Presbyterian curriculum being introduced in these times. May their efforts inspire the next generation of leaders so that the part of your church calling itself Presbyterian may go forward into its third century as a vital and dynamic force, enabling the establishment of peace and justice in the world, and proclaiming the Good News of Christ's reign.

In preparation for Pentecost, in preparation for the challenges of tomorrow, we pray in the name of the rabbi, whom we call the Christ, and whose words form the eternal message that we hold to be true. Amen.

June

Litany for the Bicentennial Observance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- Leader: All-Knowing and All-Powerful God, our church stands poised on the brink of a year-long observance, commemorating 200 years of service in the name of the living Christ. Be with us as we embark upon this celebration.*
- People: For those who have come before us, for those who are joined with us, and for those who will one day be a part of us, we offer prayer and praise.*
- Leader: Use our efforts to strengthen the witness of Presbyterian disciples around the world. Bring us together through this moment in our history, so that we might better understand your claim on our lives.*
- People: For those who have come before us, for those who are joined with us, and for those who will one day be a part of us, we offer prayer and praise.*
- Leader: Enable us to rediscover our roots by studying the biblical narrative and exploring more deeply our Reformed tradition. Help us to rejoice in those moments when we have been true to the gospel, and confess those times when we have missed the mark.*
- People: For those who have come before us, for those who are joined with us, and for those who will one day be a part of us, we offer prayer and praise.*

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

- Leader: Offer us opportunities to engage other Presbyterians whose faith expressions might differ from our own. Increase our sensitivities in thought, word and deed, and help us to explore ways in which we can lift up the richness of our diversity in the midst of our unity.*
- People:** For those who have come before us, for those who are joined with us, and for those who will one day be a part of us, we offer prayer and praise.
- Leader: Help us to discover, during the course of the coming year, concrete ways in which we can deepen our commitment, individually and corporately, to the church of Jesus Christ.*
- People:** For those who have come before us, for those who are joined with us, and for those who will one day be a part of us, we offer prayer and praise.
- Leader: Empower us with the vision to see the world through new eyes, so that we might come to understand how our rapidly changing circumstances can provide new challenges in responsible stewardship and faithful service.*
- People:** For those who have come before us, for those who are joined with us, and for those who will one day be a part of us, we offer prayer and praise.
- Leader: Grant us a celebration that is rich in its expressions of faithfulness, diverse in its heritage, united in its commitment to Jesus Christ, and expectant in its view of the future.*
- People:** This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ who has bound us together for two centuries as a Presbyterian family of faith. Amen.

July

Litany for a Summer's Day

Leader: Enduring God, you have stretched out the path before us, and the way is fraught with danger.

People: Refresh us, O Lord, for the journey.

Leader: For we are uncertain pilgrims. We see difficult terrain ahead: hazardous cliffs, wide ravines, desolate city streets, abandoned farms, jungles where the faithful route is not clearly marked.

People: Refresh us, O Lord, for the journey.

Leader: And there are those along the way who would deflect us from our journey's end: those who would manipulate us with easy answers, who would tempt us with worldly possessions, who would abuse and ridicule us so that we would hasten to turn back.

People: Refresh us, O Lord, for the journey.

Leader: But if we look carefully, we also discover that there are miracles to encounter: magnificent sunsets and delicate flowers, majestic seas and choirs of songbirds, intricate harmonies played by the breeze.

People: Refresh us, O Lord, for the journey.

Leader: And angels appear to assist us and teach us your ways: innocent children and circus clowns, elderly folks who share their wisdom and disabled persons who show us how to shatter the barriers in our own hearts and minds.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

People: Refresh us, O Lord, for the journey.

Leader: *Through it all, we stay focused on you, who gives us the courage to continue along our way, to a destination unknown, to an unfolding call: you, the beginning and the end of our existence; you, our guide and our friend; you, our salt and our light; you, whom we call Christ.*

People: Refresh us, O Lord, for the journey. Enfold us in your care. Keep us faithful and true. The world awaits our work. Amen and Amen.

August

Litany Celebrating Our Confessional Church

From CALLED TO BE DISCIPLES

Stewardship Theme Book

and THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

Leader: God of the ages, you have charged us to be defenders of the faith. In every age the church has expressed its witness in words and deeds as the need of the time required. (9.02)

People: From Nicea to Heidelberg, from Rome to Barmen, your disciples have proclaimed your power and grace. Through their example we are called to be stewards of history.

Leader: Our creeds profess who we are and what we believe and point to your unfolding revelation from generation to generation.

People: Though nations rise and fall, you remain constant.

Leader: And so we proclaim: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. (2.1)

People: You are sovereign; the earth is yours. In covenant with you, we will care for it, live in awe of it, and be grateful for having received it as a gift.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

- Leader:* Our creeds remind us that you forbid all greed and misuse and waste. They call us to do our work well, help the poor in their need. (4.110-111)
- People:* Then, as now, stewardship is our central witness.
- Leader:* As Jesus Christ is your assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so in the same way...he is also your mighty claim upon our whole life. (8.14)
- People:* In him we are a servant people, obeying your call to us in our own time and place, faithful to the witness of the past, yet bold to the challenges of an uncharted future.
- Leader:* We seek to live in continuous reformation, so that we might attain the right combination of ardor and order, building upon our history and leaning into tomorrow with unflagging hope and unbounded joy.
- All:** O God of the ages, make it so. Amen.

September

Litany for the Journey

- Leader:* Lord, you have blessed us with a vibrant, active family of faith, rich in its diversity, diligent in its service.
- People:* We give thanks to you, O God, for this gracious gift.
- Leader:* Yet, before us lies a difficult challenge: to be the church in an age of uncharted seas, new issues, and changes in the composition of our Presbyterian family.
- People:* Take the stones from our pockets, Lord; lighten our load.
- Leader:* Despite our vigor, we sometimes slip. Our bags are packed with old habits and unnecessary idols. We are weighed down with violence, prejudice and fear. We are encumbered with arrogance, self-righteousness and greed.
- People:* Take the stones from our pockets, Lord; lighten our load.
- Leader:* And as we journey, may we remember to bring others along. Your family of faith is a community which relies upon the concern and compassion of each for the other. If we charge ahead as lone rangers, we exclude others. We need to reach out and walk with each other, pushing wheelchairs before us, assisting the poor, carrying infants on our backs.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

People: Take the stones from our pockets, Lord; lighten our load.

Leader: *For if all the things we carry are of this world, our arms extend in acquisition, not acceptance. Our hearts are filled with possessions, not persons; our thoughts focus on merchandise, not mission. The weight of earthly goods will delay and delay and delay us.*

People: Take the stones from our pockets, Lord; lighten our load. Lift up our hearts in thanksgiving and praise. Give us the courage to maintain a simple lifestyle so that we can journey onward in integrity and faith. Open our eyes to the rainbow of all the earth's children. In Jesus' name, we are bold to acclaim: Amen!

October

Litany for World Communion

From CLAIMED BY GOD'S GRACE

Stewardship Theme Book

Leader: *Sovereign God, open our eyes to the intricacies of creation. Help us feel the textures of the world. Unstop our ears that we may hear your word. Breathe into us the sweet aromas of life that we may taste the fruits of your reign even now;*

People: Even now, Lord, even in Africa.

Leader: *Africa. Where your church grows rapidly. Where faith is exuberant. Where a bright mosaic of culture shows the world the vibrancy of your love.*

People: But where there is also pain, and famine and thirst. Where oppression and racial strife fill so many lives.

Leader: *Help us to stand with those who suffer, respond when we are called, give in appropriate ways so that wells will not run dry, creeping deserts may be slowed, and the chains of oppression may be lifted. Help us, Lord, that your realm may be realized, even now;*

People: Even now, Lord, even in Asia.

Leader: *Asia. So vast, so deeply rooted in tradition. Where your church is small but where religion is great. Gentle Asia, beautiful Asia, troubled Asia.*

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

People: Teach us to respect. Help us learn from those who express their faith in different ways. Deepen our understanding of tradition, prayer and power. Help us discover new meanings of witness in this ancient land.

Leader: *Awaken us to systemic issues which increase despair and prolong poverty. Guide us in responsible stewardship, that your reign may extend throughout the world, even now;*

People: Even now, Lord, even in the Middle East.

Leader: *The Middle East. The cradle of the church; the birthplace of our Lord; the land we call holy. Where the pain of the cross is so vivid; where the dry earth is watered by the tears of its children.*

People: Teach us again that we cannot feed the hungry with the barrel of a gun; we cannot quench thirst with violence and distrust. We cannot build for the future on sands of hatred.

Leader: *Lift us above strife that there might be mutual respect, that the captives might be freed, that the frightened might be comforted. Lift us, O Lord, as you lifted the stone from your son's tomb. Show us your grace, even now;*

People: Even now, Lord, even in Latin America.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

Leader: Latin America. Where your church struggles valiantly with the weak and the poor. In Latin America, where martyrs are made. In Latin America, so rich in the bounties of creation, so misused by outsiders. In Latin America, where we have made mistakes, Lord, in your name.

People: Your servants in Latin America have taught us by example. Kindle within our hearts our own integrity of faith. Inspire within us a new sense of your church.

Leader: Make us aware that through such commitment your reign will exist, not in some distant time and place, but right now, right here;

People: Here, Lord, in North America, even here.

Leader: North America, where too often affluence hides poverty and despair. North America, with so much to give. Make us bold in your Spirit, but humble in our work. Help us assume the role of the servant as Jesus did. Help us share our blessings as the Samaritan did. Help us put ourselves in others' shoes, sandals and mountain boots, bare and calloused feet, so that we might all journey together.

People: Open our eyes to the intricacies of creation. Help us feel the textures of the world. Unstop our ears that we may hear your word. Breathe into us the sweet aromas of life that we might taste the fruits of your reign, even at this time, even in this place. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

God of Every Nation, prepare our hearts as we give these tithes and gifts. Open our minds to urgent needs around the world. Grant us the insight to understand that what we do in this place has an impact upon sisters and brothers, even in distant corners of the world.

Help us to be faithful stewards, giving joyfully so that all your children are empowered to join with us on the journey toward new life. Remind us anew of the great diversity in cultural richness and personal witness that exists throughout your church.

Strengthen our sacrifice at this time and in this place so that, as we give, we do so abundantly, confident that your Spirit will guide those who use these gifts to do so in productive ways, seeking solutions to the root problems of poverty and despair, sickness and oppression, alienation and greed. In Jesus' name, make us bold to pray, "Our Father..."

November

A Prayer for Integrity at Thanksgiving

UNISON

Gracious God, we are thankful that our church is in its 200th year, and we are mindful that the history of our church parallels in many ways the history of our nation. In this season of Thanksgiving when citizens of varying beliefs express their gratitude for this land we call home, keep our minds and our hearts clear. As we join with these neighbors in grateful prayer and praise, we recognize that we have been richly blessed.

Yet, we note also that our words of thankfulness must not be spoken uncritically. Scriptures tell us that no nation is the source of salvation.

And so, we are grateful to have been a part of the beacon of freedom in the world community, while at the same time we mourn the continuation of institutional racism and intolerant attitudes. Free us from these chains, O God of compassion and liberation.

We gratefully acknowledge the bountiful resources of our land, yet in our cities and rural areas there is still much poverty. And we painfully acknowledge that we have sometimes exploited peoples and nations around the world for material gain. Free us from these chains, O God of love and grace.

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

We are thankful for those times when Presbyterian people have stood on the side of the poor and the oppressed; when we have taken a lead in civil rights, peacemaking, and in claims of justice for the outcast and the oppressed. In those moments we have seen your face in the eyes of the poor and the abused, the grief-stricken and the disillusioned.

Keep our priorities clear, Redeemer-God. Help us to differentiate between the claims of our nation and the prior claim which you have on our lives.

Build a fierce loyalty within us for the people whom you have created, all nationalities, ideologies, races and creeds. We give thanks for the words of Scripture which teach us your ways. Keep us faithful to your laws and statutes, and lift these words above those of any power or principality.

Enable us to be faithful stewards with the abundance that you have granted to us. May our expressions of thanksgiving and our plea for freedom from the idols of this world become manifested in our actions. Assist us as we strive to live peaceably with all your children. In Jesus' name. Amen.

December

Advent and Christmas Benedictions

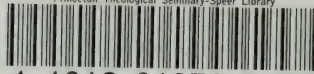
*Go into the world
With the simplicity of the stable in your hearts,
With the peace of the babe in your minds,
With the promise of the star on your lips,
And may the grace of God, the love of Jesus Christ and the
communion of the Holy Spirit abide with you along your way.
So be it. Amen.*

*Emerge from Bethlehem.
Journey toward Jerusalem.
Go, confident in the knowledge that the light of the star will
guide your way.
Understand that whatever road you take, if you are faithful,
your final destination will be the empty tomb.
And may God, the Creator, be your source of strength.
May Christ, the Redeemer, be your constant companion.
And may the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer, be your comfort in
times of need.
Amen!*

CELEBRATE THE JOURNEY

*Sing praise on this Christmas Day!
Shout for joy, for Christ is born!
Go tell it on the mountain, on the street corner and on TV,
In the marketplace and in the workplace,
Among family, friend and foe alike,
For the Prince of Peace has come among us that the world might
be saved!
May God grant you peace.
May God grant you hope.
May God grant you courage for the journey ahead!
Amen!*

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